



"providing quality, professional customer service to the public and the five primary county service branches"

1. *Law Enforcement*
2. *Fire*
3. *EMS*
4. *Public Works*
5. *Administration and Communications Center*

Did you know ???

- Madison County Communications Officers average approximately **2752** telephone interactions per month (**688 per week**) or about **33,000** phone interactions each year !
- Madison County Communications Officers average approximately **972** radio interactions per week (**3888 per month**) or approximately **46,656** radio interactions per year !

MADISON COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

November 2007

By Steve DiGiovanna - Communication Coordinator

"an exclusive publication for Madison County employees only - and for anyone else who cares to read it"

WHAT IS OUR PRIORITY ?

The **Madison County Courthouse** is one of the most unique and picturesque buildings I have ever seen as a county administrative center. I remember the first time I saw it nearly 18 years ago. I stopped the car, got out and immediately snapped off a whole roll of Kodak 35mm pictures.

Little did I expect that 16 years later I would be working in the very building I so strongly admired. There are a lot of things that are "right" about this building and this location. One may occasionally take it for granted, but aesthetically - and in the realm of wild west ambiance - it is inside and out - one of the finest county facilities around.

A CONCERN - purely from a "Communication perspective" there are a couple of issues that raise a red flag. Communication survivability is of primary concern. If this building suffers any type of substantial fire or earthquake damage - county communications (phone systems, ambulance, fire and police service) are all but finished. Dispatch won't be able to communicate with anyone - everything from the dispatch radio system to every telephone in the building is done - kaput - over and out. Basically, Communications no longer exists.

SABOTAGE (and I am avoiding specifics intentionally) the sabotage perspective is a valid concern. Homegrown terrorism, disgruntled citizens and county wide system vulnerability are also worrisome concepts.

But back to the main premise - the Communication Center sits in the basement of a 3 story, un-reinforced masonry building. The

very type of building most prone to damage during a significant seismic event. Since Madison County is located smack in the middle of one of the most seismic active areas in North America. It is a vast understatement to say this scenario is merely a vague possibility. (and please don't remind me of the '59 quake - it was 60 miles from here and the building was 50 years younger)

REALITY CHECK - no, I don't expect - nor envision the courthouse being a big pile of smoking debris any time soon - though this is certainly a possibility. But a more realistic scenario unfolds like this..... a moderate earthquake strikes nearby - and renders the building "untenable" - evacuated until it can be evaluated and (possibly) repaired.

The end result is the same as "a smoking pile of bricks" - the communication center is now unusable - and we instantly have no radio communications and no 911 phone service. Nobody can call our county 911 for help.

NOTIFICATIONS - there would be no way to notify (page) our fire departments, ambulance services or our deputies of where their emergency assistance is needed - absolutely no acceptable way to radio them, no way to dispatch them and no adequate way to communicate with them. Even the cell phones in your pocket offer no acceptable benefit.

NOW WHAT? Awareness is one of the first steps on the road to problem mitigation and prevention. From a communication point of view, communication survivability and a redundant, backup dispatch alternative in VC seems to be one of our very first priorities.

MADISON COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Monthly Newsletter

“Providing direction to Madison County Emergency Services”

November, 2007

Christopher W. Mumme, Director

What DES is up to

Considering that there are approximately 3,528 square miles in Madison County and 519 are unassigned to fire districts, one of my first projects as Director of Emergency Management was to supply fire suppression to the areas that are unassigned to any fire district.

As the county continues to grow and new structures are being built throughout these areas, the burden to the tax payer, as well as to the fire departments, increases. Tackling this very important problem, the Virginia City Fire Department, Alder Fire Department, Commissioners and the Department of Emergency Management, met to initiate a plan to properly divide the area surrounding Virginia City. V.C. and Alder fire departments agreed on a plan and have successfully divided the 97 square miles of unprotected area into two fire districts.

To accomplish this task, the Alder Fire District, having already been established, would annex in the area they have chosen for their district using the MCA: 7-33-2125. VC on the other hand, will be forming a new district under MCA: 7-33-2101, 2102 and 2103. These sites can be found on the Montana Web Site under Montana Annotated.

Both Alder and VC Fire Departments have been taking petitions around to the various owners for signature. Once we have enough signatures the petitions will be taken to the Commission and a hearing set up at a future date.

Once this phase of district forming is established and completed there are other areas such as Sheridan, South Boulder, etc. will be addressed until a very large portion of the unassigned areas is covered.

The Madison County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) was activated again after a water main was damaged by MasTech Construction crew in Sheridan. The CERT provided aid in distributing information for a boil order and locations where citizens of Sheridan could pick up potable water. Once again the team was very successful in their mission. Dept of Environmental Quality (DEQ) required a mandatory boil order for the town. Providing door-to-door information to each individual in town is a large endeavor and the CERT was up to the task. The CERT has up to 82 members at this time and would welcome more. For more information about CERT, please call Melinda Tichenor @ 406 581 5716.

You may have noticed the presence of Frank Ford, or lack thereof, has been caused by his decision to retire. Yes, Frank will be sorely missed and Frank has left very big shoes to fill. His position as Communications Coordinator has been filled by none other than Steve DiGiovanna. Steve spent 32 years as a career fire fighter in Los Angeles and San Diego County.

Steve's Montana native wife (Becky) requested a move back to Montana after he retired. Steve and his family now reside in Sheridan. He has worked as a Sheriffs office relief dispatcher for nearly 2 years. Steve is now my backup in the DES department (DES 2) and I am his backup in the communication department.

Though our primary duties are DES (Chris) and Communications (Steve), a degree of cross departmental understanding may serve the county well in the event that either of us are incapacitated, out of the area, or there are multiple or major incidents occurring in our county.